



high school biology teacher searching for mussels



students collecting macroinvertebrates



high school students searching for mussels

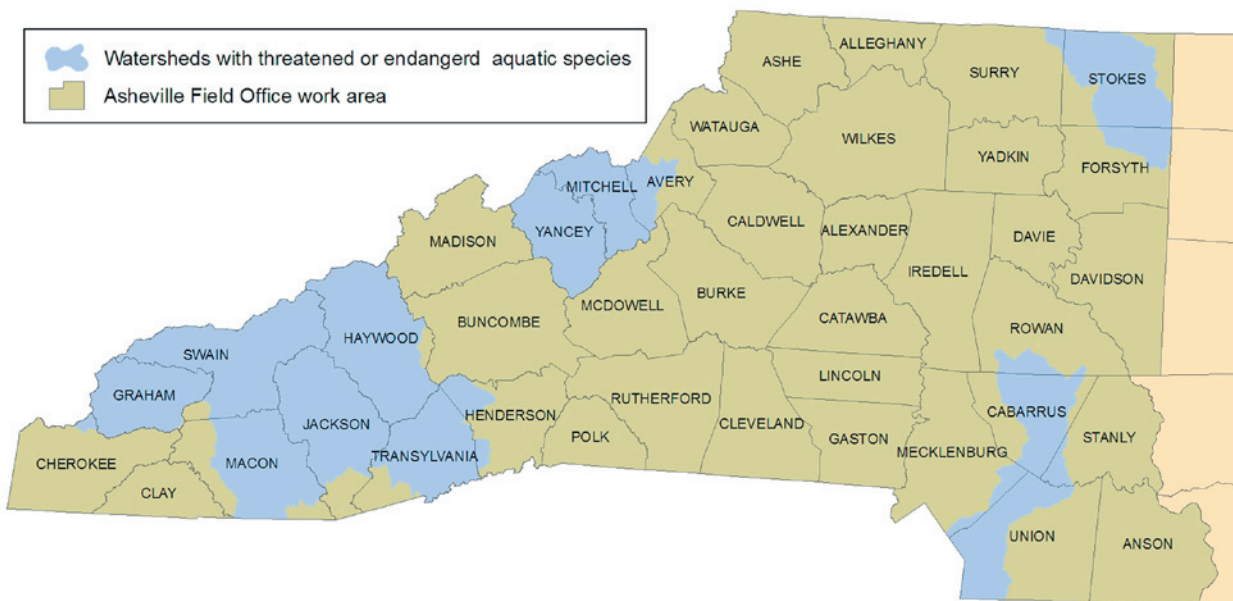
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Connecting People With Nature

Conservation Issues in the Asheville Field Office

The Fish & Wildlife Service, and specifically the Asheville Field Office, has long placed a priority on educating people about our fish and wildlife resources. The Service is also part of a larger movement to get people outside to enjoy the outdoors, a movement sparked in response to the increased amount of time people spend indoors, often sedentary. With a 41-county work area, the Asheville Field Office was posed with the challenge of how to most effectively use limited resources in its efforts to educate people and get them back outside. Hand in hand with our strategic planning and strategic landscape conservation efforts, the Asheville Field Office looked for those priority habitats where conservation was most challenging and could benefit the most from environmental education and getting people to experience the outdoors firsthand. As a result, we have focused our efforts on communities in watersheds that contain listed aquatic species, with the goal of not only getting people outside but also into the streams in their communities.

- In the spring of 2009, the Service worked with Toe River Valley Watch, a local watershed group, to organize the inaugural Toe River Valley Festival, which brought nearly every fourth grade student in North Carolina's Yancey County to the South Toe River, where they enjoyed a host of activities including searching for aquatic invertebrates, going on a nature hike, and using painting to explore patterns in nature.
- Working with a local watershed group and numerous partners, the Service annually helps every eighth-grader in Haywood County go through the "Kids in the Creek" program, where they get in the Pigeon River to sample fish and macroinvertebrates and have lessons on water chemistry and watershed health.
- In 2008 the Service began helping with the Kids in the Creek program on the North Mills River in Henderson County, reaching every eighth-grader at Rugby Middle School.





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- For the third year in a row, we're working with partners to organize a natural history workshop for river guides across Western North Carolina to help enable them to become better interpreters of the resource.
- For the 2008 Endangered Species Day, Service biologists led members of a Yancey County high school's eco-club on a paddle trip along the North Toe River, searching for the endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel.
- Getting teachers outside and into streams is a priority and as such the Service offers water quality workshops for teachers, enabling them to lead their classes in monitoring stream chemistry, basic hydrology, and macroinvertebrate life.
- Service biologists annually lead benthic macroinvertebrate sampling trips with students at East Yancey Middle School and Mountain Heritage High School in the Upper Nolichucky River Basin.
- In Union County, home of the critically endangered Carolina heelsplitter mussel, the Asheville Field Office led class discussions on development impacts to streams and worked with sixth-grade teachers at Porter Ridge Middle School to incorporate the stream that runs through their schoolyard into their science lessons.
- Working with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and local partners including Duke Energy and the Watershed Association for the Tuckasegee River, the Service helps Cherokee youth explore water quality issues and the cultural significance of rivers through programs founded on the traditional use of stone fish weirs.



Students paddling down the North Toe River